

MAY 1935

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ART FRONT



JEAN LURCAT - THE SOCIAL STERILITY OF PAINTERS

JEROME KLEIN - TWENTY-ONE GUN SALUTE • STUART DAVIS - MEDIUM OF 2 DIMENSIONS

ETHEL OLENIKOV - MAY FIRST • STEFAN HIRSCH - TECHNIQUES AND MEDIA

30,000 More Jobs

The White Collar Conference, with which the Artists Union is affiliated, was organized about two months ago on the supposition that all professional, white-collar and cultural groups and unions have a common purpose in the fight to secure jobs and adequate relief for their unemployed members. It was felt that the active cooperation of all these groups, through the medium of this conference, would secure the effective mass pressure necessary to win economic rights for teachers, artists, architects, dancers, writers, engineers, musicians and office workers. On March 14, at a mass meeting called by the Conference, it was voted to send delegations to Mr. Daniels, State Relief Administrator, and to Harry Hopkins, the Federal Administrator.

At the meeting with Mr. Daniels the delegation presented a series of projects designed to employ an estimated 250,000 unemployed white-collar, professional and cultural workers. These projects were the result of extensive research and will be of great public worth. Confronted by this definite program and by a determined delegation, Mr. Daniels admitted the fitness of the projects, and the demands of the delegation.

In Washington, Mr. Hopkins also admitted that steps should be taken to alleviate the desperate plight of the professional, white-collar and cultural population. As an immediate concession he promised to double the number now employed on work relief from the present 30,000 to 60,000. The delegation maintained that this was entirely inadequate, as it represented only 20 per cent of the unemployed, and promised to return with a larger representation determined to secure jobs for all this section of the unemployed.

The following projects for artists formed part of the program submitted:

PROJECTS FOR PAINTERS, GRAPHIC ARTISTS AND COMMERCIAL ARTISTS

1. Individual creative projects.
 - a. Work produced to be exhibited at a municipal art center which will serve as a lending library of art, such art to be loaned to public institutions and individuals at a nominal fee.
2. Teaching projects in public institutions.
3. Mural decorations, mosaics, stained glass window designs and work for execution in public buildings.
4. Restoration and reconditioning of works of art.
5. Original research and illustration of research.
6. Anatomical studies.
7. Design, illustration and decoration of publications issued by governmental departments.
8. Poster and placard design.

PROJECTS FOR SCULPTORS, CARVERS AND ALLIED CRAFTSMEN

1. Individual creative projects.
2. Commemorative busts, plaques, panels.
3. Restoration of public building decorations and monuments.
4. Plastic models of architecture, housing and other construction plans.

CONDITIONS

Trade union recognition on the projects. Trade union wages of \$2.00 per hour for no less than 15 hours of work per week, no more than 30 hours per week.

A Strike

The Artists Union has supported the silk screen process workers in their strike to raise their meager wage, to win Union recognition, and hours, by joining in their mass picket line in front of the American Display Corporation at 521 West 57th Street.

Picketing is now going on in front of the American Display plant and in front of movie houses using silk screen process displays produced by this plant. Working class organizations, unions and clubs are supporting the strike by assisting the pickets with food, support to the mass picket line, contributions and mass protests to the American Display Corporation and to movie houses using their products.

THE UNION

Cracking Down 38 Cents A Day

ONE of the most vital cases with which the Artists Union has been faced is that of Bernard Child and Florence Lustig, two teachers on art work relief projects, who were fired from their jobs for organizational activity.

These artists were leaders in the successful fight for the reinstatement of Laredo and Sanders, who had been unwarrantedly dismissed from their jobs, and who were replaced through the efforts of the Artists Union.

Shortly after the reinstatement of the two artists, the College Art Association, administrators of the art projects, undertook a cracking down policy. A few minutes of lateness was penalized by an extra hour's docking; a ruling was published to the effect that an artist automatically fires himself if he is late on his job three consecutive times. (These teachers, though they have more than met the standard of professional teachers, are getting only \$24.00 weekly, or about half the regular wage.) The Artists Union Grievance Committee, which had formerly dealt with the administrators, was now refused admittance. Child and Lustig, two of the most active organizers, whose ability as teachers was never questioned by the administration, were first transferred and then fired from their jobs.

The Artists Union voted to picket the College Art Association, and the following Saturday an immense picket line paraded up and down before the building with a generous police chaperonage. The College Art locked its doors and posted in the window a sign: "Closed on Saturday." They refused to admit a delegation from the Union, refused to reconsider the cases of Child and Lustig.

Tenants of the building complained. The landlord threatened eviction. A drug store and a beauty parlor threatened to sue for loss of business. And meanwhile the College Art has seen its cherished maternal reputation withering under the public attention drawn to the picket line.

Growing desperate, they shifted the responsibility to Grace Gosselin, head of the "white-collar" projects in New York. At a hearing closed to observers, to the press, and to the American Civil Liberties Union, Gosselin supported the College Art and refused to reinstate Child and Lustig.

The action of the College Art Association is a denial of the right of artists employed on relief jobs to organize, to better their wage levels, their hours and working conditions. It is up to the Artists Union to carry on a picket line of such strength that the College Art Association will be forced to concede to our demands, to reinstate Child and Lustig. These artists must be given an open hearing. A committee of artists and sympathizers has been formed to enlist public interest. They ask that protests be sent to Grace Gosselin and to Knauths, head of the New York Relief Commission.

Sculptors and Carvers

ON Thursday, April 11, sculptors, stone carvers, modelers and wood carvers, members of the Sculptors' Section of the Artists Union, and three American Federation of Labor sculptor and allied craft unions, held a joint mass meeting at the Artists Union headquarters to discuss ways and means to combat the proposed Roosevelt \$50.00 a month "security" wage on work relief projects.

The need for unity has been forcefully brought home to these sculptors and carvers on the Park Department art projects. Before securing these jobs, they had to pass tests and to qualify as skilled carvers, only to be given cleaning fluid and scrub brush to wash monuments after their applications had been approved. In dealing with the one hundred and fifty craftsmen on the job, the Park Department used a wide variety of qualifications with a corresponding variety of wage scales, in many cases for the same kind of work. Some of the men were classified as sculptors receiving \$38.25 a week, some as assistants receiving \$23.00 a week, and others as carvers receiving the union wage of \$14.00 a day; this for 4½ days a month. S. Feruggia, a sculptor, who received \$38.25 a week, was suddenly and without

THE Emergency Home Relief Bureau Administration, in its recent "patronage" feud with the Tammany-inspired Aldermanic Investigating Committee, has proclaimed through the press its deep concern for the welfare of white collar and cultural workers on relief rolls. In truth, the administration has inaugurated new Divisions and has used every technical excuse to eliminate these workers from relief rolls.

Many artists, for instance, although they have established satisfactory proof of residence, have discovered that they have been placed in the Unattached and Transient Division of the Relief Department, a recently inaugurated classification which makes them ineligible for work relief. Investigators, visiting these artists, order them to C.C.C. camps or to Camp Greycourt, an old prison farm now being used as a subsistence homestead for unattached men. The Grievance Committee of the Unemployed Section of the Artists Union took a few such cases before the College Art Association and the Home Relief Bureaus, protested against this concentration camp and forced labor, and demanded art work for these artists in their own professions. We secured their reinstatement on regular home relief rolls and established their eligibility for work relief projects.

In another case, one of our artists who was on home relief secured private employment for a few weeks and asked to be dropped from the relief rolls. He spent the money he had earned for necessary living expenses and, finding no other source of income, was forced to apply to the Home Relief Bureau for reinstatement. He was told that he was not eligible, that he should have budgeted his private income according to relief standards, and that the sum he had earned should have lasted until some time in June. The Grievance Committee protested against the attempt to set a budget of 38 cents a day (for food, light, gas, etc.) for workers in private employment. They demanded his immediate replacement on the relief rolls. The artist was reinstated two days after this protest.

The Grievance Committee of the Unemployed Section has also been successful in stopping evictions of artists on home relief and in securing necessary clothing allowances and medical attention for artists.

Due to the mass picketing in front of the College Art Association, at 137 East 57th Street, every Saturday morning, and frequent picketing during the week, as many as twenty artists have secured jobs on work relief during the past month. In order better to organize the fight for jobs and adequate relief for all unemployed artists, the Unemployed Section of the Artists Union will hold regular meetings every Friday evening at 8:30 P.M. All artists on home relief and artists in need of work or relief are urged to attend these meetings.

reason reclassified as an assistant and his wages were cut to \$23.00 a week. Feruggia is doing the same work as before. Members of the same union, in one case the Artists Union, in another the Modelers and Sculptors of America, were placed in different categories.

Such confusion tended to create antagonism among the craftsmen. But faced with an immediate threat of the cutting of stone-carvers' wages to \$7.00 a day, 10 days a month, and with the passage of the Roosevelt work relief program, they realized the need for unity and for the elimination of any jurisdictional conflicts among the unions and union members that would handicap their struggle against this lowering of their wages of the Artists' Union.

(Continued on page 8)

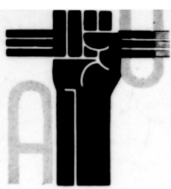
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"ARTISTS' MATERIALS FOR PERMANENT ART"



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Boon-Doggling

In an effort to discredit and ridicule the few government relief projects that have made any real contribution to society, that is, the cultural projects—which include mural painting, art teaching, the dance, music, the theatre,—the Aldermanic investigating committee has jumped upon the term "boon-doggling." Boon-doggling, it seems, is anything that cannot be measured in miles, as the tearing up of trolley car tracks; in tons, as road-building materials; in dollars and cents, as government buildings erected by relief labor at half pay.

Boon-doggling for Tammany politicians is a means of forcing political patronage. Boon-doggling for some thirty thousand white-collar employees is bread and butter. Boon-doggling for three hundred members of the Artists Union is teaching adults and children to draw and paint, illustrating new reading material for public schools, painting murals at from \$1.00 to \$7.00 per square foot.

Scientific and literary research are boon-doggling, the arts, sciences and other activities which contribute to the city's cultural wealth. If you are boon-doggling you are paid \$24.00 a week for thirty hours of work, and are under constant threat of being left penniless by a sudden shift in administration policy. For has not Mr. Knauths, the new relief head, said, "The situation is bad, and the people must be fed before they are amused."

Nobody Loves Him

Jonas Lie does not like mural painters. Mural painters do not like Jonas Lie. And yet Mr. Lie continues to remain the painter member of the Municipal Art Commission. Mr. Lie has never liked murals. In 1933 when murals were becoming more than glorified wall paper, when the term was coming to be used synonymously with "social content," Mr. Lie came out flat-footed for the destruction of the Radio City mural. Events move rapidly, and in 1934 Mr. Lie further clarified his stand on mural destruction by rushing back from Europe to bail out of jail a fanatic patriot who threw acid on a panel satirizing the Roosevelt Administration.

His open antagonism to federal projects, his complete lack of sympathy with contemporary art, his present activities as official vetoer of murals containing the slightest social tinge, have impelled New York artists to take action against him. The Society of Mural Painters voted unanimously on a resolution asking for his removal. (Official pressure brought about a withdrawal of this resolution.) Painters on Project 202, the mural project of the Works Division, have obtained the signatures of practically all its men for a resolution asking for Mr. Lie's removal. The resentment against Jonas Lie is becoming concretized. A petition drawn up by the Artists Union will be circulated among artists and art organizations asking for his resignation, and asking for an art commission which will democratically represent the artists.

Kodak As You Go

—But not in Cuba. Afroyim, an American painter, a member of the Artists' Union, stopped in Cuba for a few months on his way to Mexico. He made some drawings of what he saw in Cuba. He took a number of photographs.

Perhaps what he found there was not the sort of thing that the Havana Chamber of Commerce recommends to artists. He was arrested on a charge of "conspiring to implant a Soviet Government in Cuba". His drawings and photographs were confiscated. Letters to friends in New York were intercepted, and his appeal to the American ambassador to intercede for him was put off on a flimsy excuse. As a result he was tried without legal representation and sentenced to the Isle of Pines for two years.

The American Anti-Imperialist League has taken up Afroyim's case. They ask that letters of protest be sent to Jefferson Caffery, American ambassador to Cuba, and to the Cuban Embassy in Washington.

Our government has been zealous in protecting the property interests of American bankers in Cuba. How about the freedom of American citizens?

Competitions With- out Pay Artists and A. F. of L.

The newly organized Painters' and Sculptors' Section of the Treasury Department is trying to repeat its coup of obtaining the reams of publicity that were harvested under the now defunct P.W.A.P. They have sent bulletins to some 3,500 artists who last year enjoyed economic security for from one to fifteen weeks, announcing that eleven painters and two sculptors are to receive the choice jobs in Washington's public buildings. Another 250 have received invitations to bid on the remaining fifteen small panels. The bulletin also mentions some minor local jobs sparsely distributed in various regions.

Careful distinction between merit and need have been made. Though the need clause has been painstakingly fulfilled (none of the artists chosen happens to be in need), the authorities have been a bit careless of the merit clause, and have let slip a few flat tires such as Kroll, Kent, Savage, Zorach, et al.

This new tack of government responsibility toward art and culture, if continued, will succeed in keeping thousands of artists hopefully designing mural sketches for years without any compensation for their efforts. No artist, if at all realistic, will tolerate this denial of the principle that a man must be paid for his labor.

The problem of adequate provision for the artist remains unsolved, but the solution is simple. All

Artists, both independent and those on relief, are being forced to turn to the government for jobs. The greater number of these jobs are on mural projects where the artists work alongside members of the building trades unions. These unions have their wage scales and working conditions established. The influx of new people working at lower wages, under non-union conditions, is to them a direct threat to their wage scales and living standards.

The Artists Union has taken steps to establish a union wage scale for artists, with minimum and maximum hours, and union working conditions. Meanwhile the artists must have the support of other workers in winning recognition of these demands.

On some projects, A. F. of L. workers have already joined with Artists Union members in their demands. Union members now feel more strongly than ever the necessity of cooperating with other unions, of being on a solid trade union basis. The union has voted to apply for a charter in the American Federation of Labor, to join forces with the five million workers and craftsmen now belonging to the A. F. of L. for union recognition and the establishment of union wages on work relief jobs.

competition should be wide open, payment commensurate with the work should be made to all competitors. Artists should have complete freedom of expression. Juries should be selected by the artists.



The Social Sterility of Painters

Because of its length the editors have taken the liberty of dividing Mr. Lucrat's article. The first part follows; the second will be carried in the June issue of ART FRONT.

FOR the last twenty years we have been thinking a great deal about painting. We have been thinking around painting. We find ourselves violently struck by the impact that can come from a piece of canvas surrounded by gilded oak, and suddenly the world seems to be nothing but a suburb of this concentrated space. Then we come back to ourselves. The rings on the water die away. We thought we were overwhelmed, but this pleasant titillation, this pompous rhetoric of the eye, isn't that all that we are looking for?

I doubt it. I doubt that the painter, hoisted on the pinnacle of curiosity, bombarded by money, by questionable friends, by state awards, is really conscious that he has betrayed his role. In former times exponent of the idea of God, architect of the images of the gods, has he ever stopped to consider in these days of the laity his own meagerness, his own solitude? Has not the demand for originality anchored him to a rock, a rock standing on sand? Anyone who has observed, during the last twenty years, how many of the little mounds of earth which we thought secured our old treasure of Occidental civilization have crumbled into dust, anyone who is convinced that we are living only in a sort of suspense, that injustice has been raised into a very system which cannot much longer hold its own; that, in a word, our world, the whole world, is in the grip of an irresistible impulse to stop payment, such a man cannot but admit that painting today emulates this state of affairs. It offers nothing or little that can satisfy the essential needs of the human spirit.

I am getting off the track. I grant to each painter (there are twenty thousand of us in Paris) a consciousness of his day, of its trends, that faculty of sensing currents which they no longer trust to anything but machines. Perhaps I grant them too much, for I will get nothing for my pains. The painter lives alone, confined, retired and kept. Pride has slowly tamed his gestures. "Society is no longer for him, no, neither for him nor for the poet." And we see him trying to make himself at home in a caste of untouchables.

What is then the problem?

After all, an obvious fact imposes itself. Reality is trampled underfoot, exploited at the bottom, nibbled away at the top. Reality indeed, still intact, still unexplored but sufficiently healthy to revenge itself from time to time. What has the painter become in this conflict? His is the problem we must determine. And to what extent has he, though an accomplice, realized the fact he is victim.

I believe that the conception of painting has become clouded in the mind of the painter because for the last thirty years the painter has let himself be overwhelmed by "incident" painting. He wants to live his life, and at the same time to draw from this experience and this adventure his means of existence. He isolates himself from the system of community life of which he wants to know only the outward

manifestations, and only the most comfortable and exciting of these manifestations. Thus, his idea of painting has become, to know only one class of society, the class he reveres as much as despises, to impose upon this class certain ways of feeling, no longer even believing in the value of his attempt, to pretend to accept this life based on reciprocal misunderstanding. These two groups can meet only on the admittedly barren and waste ground of money. This is the true face of the painter's triumph. The work of art, gulped down with a certain solemn ceremony by its proprietor, must show "strength," must wear on a face irremediably tired, a distorted label of vitality and representation.

The consequences could not but make themselves violently felt. Living in spiritual isolation never helps one see clearly into himself, nor into the world around him. This refusal to collaborate with the great public—one can already see these gentlemen grimace—this alliance with a single class based only on taste, this could not do otherwise than to precipitate the painter into an individualism of effusion and fabrication, to make him see his painting as a function of painting for painting's sake.

The negation of this old mission which does not lack grandeur, the commenting upon and re-creating by means of images the central ideas of his time, has brought the painter to a state of social sterility. The truth is that he prizes nothing more than his own liberty, even though it is but the abstract shadow of a liberty existing only in words, and God knows how temporarily.

He slavishly recognizes only the ambition of his ancestors to illustrate the signs of their times. His rejection of subject matter has progressed to a refusal of the object itself. His scorn of the object has precipitated him into an abstraction through which the whole era in all its phases will before long come to its death. He has tried to make himself brawny because he is alone. The result has been the formation of a state within a state, a society closed, congealed, the world of the painters, distilling slowly its customs, its laws, its press, its market of values. One must show that he "belongs" in order to get in—that is, to agree not to consider anything unusual which the painter may demand through his hyper-sensitivity or his scapegrace pride.

This society has been slowly invaded by an imperialism peculiar to itself, having knowledge of its productive powers, its territories of expansion. The governments have taken possession, moving their pawns to suit their own propaganda. Barriers of custom have gradually been raised, quotas set, and saturation having been reached, depressions have followed. Thus a cycle is completed, demonstrating that far from resisting the moral and economic pressure of the times, a society abstract, vain and speculative has sought for itself a separate destiny, set itself a private standard. Having established itself between the masses and the creator, it has slowly cut itself off from any essential roots, has, one can say, insidiously smothered the man under the individual.

Let us see in what measure the middle class can also lay claim to this attitude of the painter's mind, whether the two attitudes are related, and in what way their zones of interest overlap. Were one to accept painting purely as an art centered in itself, the fatalities of which concern itself alone, what can he call it? A sensuality developed into an esthetic theory and nothing more. Nothing. The compromise upon which we live and move. Matisse, Leger, Picasso, Brancusi and so many others—what is it if not this? "The picture moves me only because it is a picture, and it is a picture only in the measure to which purely pictorial considerations have presided to the exclusion of all others at its conception and fabrication." This position in its immediate expression stands strong so long as we have not brought to light the reasons for its appeal to the will for pleasure.

But on the contrary, do we not find it typical of a conformist class that, relaxing after its effort of production, it desires nothing so much as an art

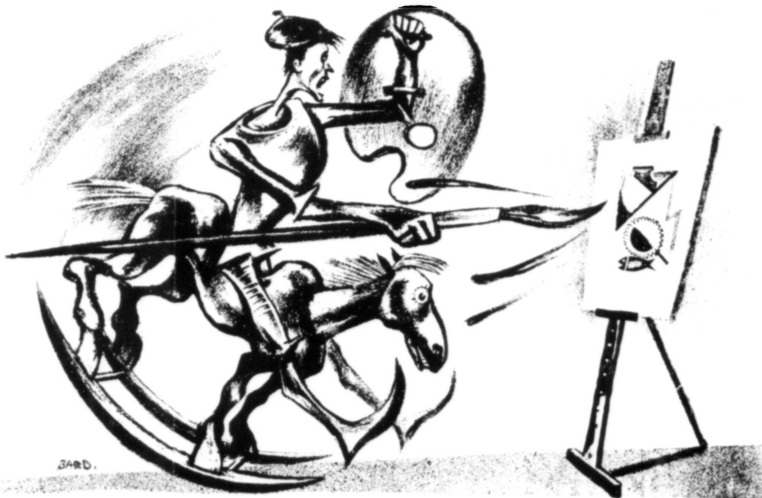
MAY

IN the third group exhibition of paintings now being shown at the Artists Union there is a picture by Sara Berman which she calls "Haymarket." The central motif of the canvas revolves around four somber figures, each encased in the white shroud of the hanged, each with the noose already tightening around the throat. Back of this picture, back of the four martyrs strung to the gallows, back of Haymarket itself, is the grim and formidable struggle of American workers for a little sunshine, a little time for rest, a bit of social intercourse with friend and neighbor. The First of May, famed in rhymed couplets and in lilting song as a day of posies and of dancing round the Maypole, has been marked in blood by the bitter struggles of the working class, as its day to demonstrate to its oppressors a solid and unflinching determination to win for itself a little of the gaiety and joyousness of song and story.

A need for eight hours of work, eight hours of play, eight hours of rest; a need to escape the bondage of a twenty-four hour service to the greedy lust of a rising capitalism; a need to make clear when the time which the worker sells is ended, and when his own begins; a need which in 1886, on the First of May, was thundered to the ruling class by the workers of America, and thundered so gloriously that the reverberations have echoed and re-echoed in every country of the world until today May First is the international day of labor, when the workers of the whole world, marching solidly side by side, express themselves as a class ready to struggle for its needs as a class.

As early as the first decades of the nineteenth century, the workers of the United States, already being knit together by the expanding industrial economy, began to make known their demands for a legally limited working day. The conditions of their servitude which demanded from fourteen to twenty hours of labor, a daily stint from sunrise to sunset, were met by strikes and agitation for a reduction of hours. In Philadelphia, as early as 1827, the demand for a ten-hour day impelled a strike of building trades workers. In other industrial centers, masses of workers rallied around the demand for the ten-hour day, and so great was their pressure that the government was moved to decree the ten-hour day for all civil service employees. Not content with this partial victory, the workers continued their fight for the establishment of a universal ten-hour day. Their victories in many industries during the next decades led to the raising of a new slogan for labor: the eight-hour day. The American workers, like the working class in every other country in which industry was newly flourishing were fighting determinedly for the adoption of a shorter working day. "Thus," wrote Marx, "on both sides of the Atlantic did the working class movement, a spontaneous outgrowth of the conditions of production, endorse the words of Factory Inspector G. J. Saunders: 'Further steps toward a reformation of society can never be carried out with any hope of success, unless the hours of labor be limited and the prescribed limit strictly enforced.'"

America, with its revolutionary tradition, with its heritage of struggle, carried this tradition and this heritage to greater heights when in 1884, at the fourth convention of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and



of acquiescence, of sensationalism, of decorative power. Painting addresses itself, then, to these groups in which power is distributed. We might condone this were the class we are dealing with young, open-minded, holding the world well in hand, really mistress of the world. But what do we see? A class in a state of ruin, driven by its own machines of production, overcrowded; for the last twenty years witnessing the breakdown of the laws on which were based its reasons for being, its ethic, its methods of thinking and working, and, final symptom, the breakdown of its faith in itself.

The painter, it is evident, fails to get to the bottom of things. The painter doesn't want to plumb the depths of this morality, search into which would only bring him proof that the order which has moulded him and supported him is based on confusion of principles, on struggles without mercy, on the exploitation of man by man, on a clearly ridiculous.

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1 S T

Canada—later known as the American Federation of Labor—a resolution was passed that from May 1, 1886, eight hours should constitute a legal day's labor, and that all labor organizations throughout their jurisdiction were to "so direct their laws as to conform to this resolution by the time named." May 1, 1886, thus became designated as a day when all organized labor would together walk out of shop and mine and factory.

Such a call for a national strike, involving thousands of workers, could not be anything but a summons to struggle. The temper of the workers, grown more fiercely militant by the strike battles of the "elegant eighties," was further sharpened by an acute increase in the strikes and lockouts during 1885, and a whole spirit of heightened militancy marked the approach of the First of May, 1886. All over the country on that May First was heard the sound of marching feet. In New York, in Washington, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Milwaukee, Baltimore. In Chicago, where the mood of the workers was most aggressive, the battle waged fiercest. It was from Chicago's Haymarket Riot, where McCormick, "the Reaper," on May 4, sent forth his hired police to attack workers meeting to protest the brutal assault of these same police on striking McCormick employees, that Sara Berman takes the name for her picture; and the four men she portrays, Parsons, Spies, Fischer and Engel, were the militant leaders of Chicago's working class who were railroaded to the gallows as a threat to the whole of Chicago's working class by the employers. Chicago's bankers and industrialists thought to halt the triumphant thousands who marched on May First by bloody assault, by terror, by intimidation, and by the slaughtering of leaders. McCormick succeeded in sending the four to the hangman, and in trampling others to death under the hooves of his police horses, but he, allied with all the other reactionaries in the country, could not stop the spirit and the vigor of May Day.

The Artists Union has had its year of struggle. Today it is faced with sharper issues than ever before—the right to organize on the job, the fight for union wages, the struggle for increased appropriations to cover all unemployed artists, the need for genuine social insurance, protest against Roosevelt's starvation program for work relief. It has learned that as the weapons of the working class are weapons, as militant mass action and organized demonstration are the only means to obtain better conditions, so is the working class their class, and its fight their fight.

The antagonisms, the chaos and bitter contradictions of a decaying system, have eaten their way through the four-walled seclusion of the artist. In breaking down these four walls, in coming out into the tumult, he has been faced with the necessity of choosing the side on which to fight. On the one hand, there is a world deadened by itself, cruel and ferocious in its last agonies; on the other, through the vigor and the strength of the working class, there is the future. As part of this working class, as one with it, every artist must come out into the streets May First, must down chisel and brush, must march shoulder to shoulder with his fellow workers toward the future.

Ethel Olenikov.



George Grosz

Techniques and Media

GESSO PAINTING

The following is the first of a series of articles which Stefan Hirsch will write for ART FRONT about the various techniques of painting. Mr. Hirsch has also offered to answer through ART FRONT technical questions asked by readers.

WE are confronted with the problem of creating the art of a socially changing world. We have to handle subject matter for which we have only little precedent. We have to find symbols to express our social philosophy. We want to meet this situation with the best possible equipment, and with a minimum of mental and technical ballast. We want the technical side of our craft to be no sordid duty, but an inspiration for the formal aspects of our art. We must not be forced to lower our standards of form and content to a level determined by technical incompetence. We must master a technique that constantly offers new possibilities as the requirements vary.

To meet this social as well as artistic postulate, I shall, in the following series of articles, give outlines of various procedures in painting. I am aware of the variety of possible formulas in any technique, and of the ensuing confusion. I shall therefore make my choice, based on long personal experience, and describe in each case only the one method and its modifications which to me appears to be the soundest and most easily accommodated to different styles and purposes.

To discuss tempera or oil painting, one has to begin with the ground. The basis of the artistic suc-

cess of such painting is the white gesso ground—for physical, chemical and optical reasons.

Frame: A frame is made of clear white pine strips, 1½ to 3 inches wide, the outside measurements of which correspond to the size planned. If the panel is large, cross-pieces are required for this frame. A panel of prestwood or Masonite (from any lumber yard) is cut to size. Its rough side is glued to the frame with strong carpenter's glue, and to this clamps or heavy weights are applied for two days. This frame is not absolutely necessary, but is advisable for the protection of the panel against warping and other damage. The panel is rubbed with fine sandpaper to supply a key for the gesso, and the dust is cleaned off.

Size: A tablet of French rabbit's skin glue bearing the trademark of Chardon is broken into small pieces. (Source, B. F. Drakenfeld & Co., 45 Park Place, New York.) Soak overnight 2 ounces of this glue in 34 fluid ounces of water. Dissolve this in a double boiler. (Every heating process in the making of gesso has to be done in the double boiler. Neither glue nor gesso should ever be boiled, as this causes excessive loss of water.)

When this size is hot mix a small quantity of it with ¼ ounce of powdered alum (source, any drug store) and stir this into the size. This will waterproof the glue and gesso after they have set.

With a good glue brush at least 3 inches wide, give the panel a thin and even coat of hot size, and let

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R E V I E W S

Twenty-one Gun Salute

THERE were two exhibitions on the "social scene" installed in Eighth Street during April—one at the Whitney Museum with a decidedly Fifth Avenue slant, the other at the A.C.A. Gallery, reflecting its greater proximity to Sixth Avenue.

Croquet-and-crinoline is the dominant tone of the Whitney's main floor installation of sober nineteenth century realism. The contemporaries, shunted upstairs, are chiefly of Coney Island realist persuasion. Mr. Adolph Glassgold is convinced that the contrast between the grayish quiet below and the noisy outburst above is significant and instructive, denoting a new awakening among artists, etc. He even declared, in a symposium at the A.C.A., that the Whitney show reaches a crescendo in two or three revolutionary indictments of the present order (Refregier, Soyler).

If that is a crescendo, then the A.C.A. show is nothing short of a twenty-one gun salute to the revolution. For, ruling out a few scattered misguided efforts, this show begins on about the level where the Whitney show ends.

While Raphael Soyler's park bench unemployed must be considered right up on the barricades at the Whitney, his East River lounging "lumpen" definitely constitute a rear-guard action (?) at the A.C.A. None of the Soyers gets any closer to the front lines. Moses presents a young Negress posed in a room as "one of the oppressed," while Isaac's "Demonstration" is transparently a studio arrangement.

Despite their evident limitations, the works of the Soyers have their positive qualities. The attitude of the artist in painting a standing inactive Negress has a significance not to be overlooked. Even so honest an artist as Winslow Homer set the Negro off in a special frame, showing that he too unconsciously wore the blinders of "white superiority." The Negress represented by Moses Soyler has dignity and self-assurance—she is treated as an equal. (Cf. Thomas Benton's recent exhibition at the Ferargil Gallery—the Negro as picturesque to the paternalistic white.) The Soyers have all taken a step to the left, and there they are poised—they have looked out from the studio into the street, but they have not yet stepped down into it.

To take a further step is to represent the will for struggle. In content the relief demonstration pictures by A. Harritan and N. Cicovsky are both on this higher plane, but in their method of realizing the content they still rely on the devices of detached estheticism. Thus Harritan uses wholly inappropriate Picasso-like figures, while Cicovsky's work is much too sweet for a grim battle between police and unemployed. His workers all have the "skin you love to touch."

G. Cavallon and Max Spivak put the representation of militant working class activity on a higher plane because they have effected a clean break with idealist esthetic not merely in content, but also in form and execution. Spivak's "Demonstration" especially has a lot of drive, and would be still stronger with a cleaner and surer execution. In any event these artists are developing in encouraging fashion.

Thus there are discernible in the A.C.A. show on the "social scene" successive stages of effectiveness in the effort of artists to come to grips with the deeper realities of the world they live in. By considering this work as a progression, it becomes clear that the most advanced artists turn to the street not for an exciting spectacle, as do the realists of the Coney Island stripe, but for a deeper understanding of those forces whose grip they now so directly feel. Such an understanding implies a clear view, a definite alignment of the artist with the working class as a progressive force, and (what is naturally not to be found in the Whitney show) if the artist is consistent, a determination not merely to portray those inescapable realities with truth, but in the portraying to help mould those realities, to make of his art at once a record and an instrument for changing the world in a progressive sense.

The examples discussed have been chosen for their illustrative value, not because they are necessarily the most important works. A number of artists, like Burck and Gropper, whose position is too well known to require discussion, have been delib-

erately overlooked. I propose to wind up the review, not with an evaluation of the various works shown, but with a consideration of some of the important artistic problems involved.

If the artist is to be effective, he can hardly be too concrete and specific. Thus he will avoid such indirection as Emptage uses in his San Francisco dock strike, showing a single worker knocked out, and instead of a real assailant, the words "National Guard" rolling out of the smoke of a steamer in a very tricky way. One has to figure out what is meant. There is no virtue in the cryptic. Equally bad is the conversion of a realistic situation into pure ornament. There is a picture by Eiphyre which is just a piece of stained glass. The artist has entirely lost sight of the end in view.

If the subjects are to be real and convincing, repugnant extremes are out of order, Kainen's "gorilla" revolutionary being as wide of the mark as Cicovsky's pretty boys. Green horses are all right for Gauguin, but they spoil the effectiveness of "Mass Pressure" by Hantman.

Examples need hardly be multiplied. This show poses all the problems faced by the artists who have the courage to meet the issue of social responsibility in artistic creation. It is significant because it not only poses the problems, but also shows artists struggling, and in some cases succeeding in finding the solution.

Jerome Klein.

A medium of 2 Dimensions

MR. WEINSTOCK finds contradictions in abstract art in his comments on the Abstract Painting in America exhibition at the Whitney Museum. There is nothing surprising in this as Mr. Weinstock is supposedly an advocate of the general theory of dialectical materialism, in which nature and society are perceived to be in a constant state of revolutionary movement through the struggle of the contradictions or opposites present in all unities.

I think that in searching for the contradictions he has overlooked some very apparent affirmations. One, that abstract painting actually does exist. Two, that a number of abstract paintings of the last twenty-five years clearly come within the field of first rate art. Three, the revolutionary history of abstract painting.

In his first paragraph he admits having received distinct emotional pleasure on observing the pictures in this exhibition. In his next to last paragraph he denies the primary statement, proving I suppose further contradictions. In his desire to affirm the approaching revolutionary art of the international labor movement he is undialectical in his tendency to deny the reality of bourgeois origins and concomitants. For example in the recent exhibitions of painting and sculpture at the Artists Union, there were quite a few exhibits well within the category of abstract art, and no one could say that they were among the worst of the exhibits. True, these abstractions were not in general the expression of that class consciousness which a more lengthy participation in any union activities tends to produce. But these, and all abstractions, were the result of a revolutionary struggle relative to the bourgeois academic traditions of the immediate past and even the present. In the materialism of abstract art in general, is implicit a negation of many ideals dear to the bourgeois heart. Abstract art will in turn be negated along with its bourgeois associations, but in our awareness of this let us see the situation realistically and admit that abstract art is still in the picture. Does Mr. Weinstock pretend that the abstract tendencies in painting and the fascist tendencies of the American Scene school of Benton, etc., are both alike because they are both within the bourgeois scheme? Such a view would not seem to be realistic.

In regard to Mr. Weinstock's criticism of my introduction to the catalogue of the Abstract Show at the Whitney Museum, I can well imagine that the introduction is open to criticism. However, I am not sure that the points selected by Mr. Weinstock are the weakest. My description of a painting as a two-dimensional space definition which is parallel to nature, and which is forceful to the degree of its logical clarity, he finds inadequate and undialectical.

Perhaps it is, to one not too familiar with the subject, but with this theory I have gotten results which are admitted to be good relative to the time and place. The definition assumed that the artist was already in possession of an idea which was the result of his contact with nature, which idea was qualitatively different than the sum of the sources of its generation. Add conditioning by the mind material and the emergence of a new quality by its transference to a medium of two dimensions, the canvas. Maybe the use of the phrase "parallel to nature" is incorrect from the standpoint of philosophical usage. But the definition was meant to be a description of the material quality of a painting and did not by intention imply that because the painting was a quality distinct from its sources, it had no connection with them. Further, it did not by intention imply that the two-dimensional space definition was an act undirected by social purpose.

Finally, I wish to say that I was asked by the Whitney Museum to write a very short resume of the Abstract movement in America, and that considerations of space caused them to omit, among other items, the following extracts from my introduction as submitted to them.

"At about 1926 or 1927 three separate tendencies began to make themselves felt (in American art). They were, a desire to be wholly American and disassociate oneself from foreign ideas. Two, a following of the surrealist objectives as they were being developed in Paris, and three, a growing belief in the necessity of a social content in art."

"This school (the American tendency) quite illogically stated in effect that an American artist could only be conscious of America and that foreign influences should like devils be cast out. They waved the flag. They denied progress and chose a parochial objective."

"The third tendency, the necessity of a social content in art, has a firmer base on which to stand. The adherents of this school argue that abstract art was divorced from reality, that it had no contact with the people. While admitting its technical contributions they deny it any cultural validity. Because fundamentally the concern of the abstract artist had been his own canvas and a select group of those interested in art. The abstract artist did not concern himself with the life problems of the people around him. Therefore, says the social content school, he has betrayed his place of trust as cultural leader. He has not been realistic."

"But the abstract artist was realistic at least with regard to his materials."

"If the historical process is forcing the artist to relinquish his individualistic isolation and come into the arena of life problems, it may be the abstract artist who is best equipped to give vital artistic expression to such problems—because he has already learned to abandon the ivory tower in his objective approach to his materials."

Stuart Davis.

Studies Into Living Substance

THE Artists Union was created on the unheard-of (to artists) assumption that artists were workers in a trade, economically implicated, and that they could in no way afford to separate their experience as artists from their ordinary social and specifically economic experience. The relation of art to jobs was vividly described for the artist. A little over a year of militant struggle followed and now the union in its sculpture show finds it possible for a moment to enjoy a long breath and reverse the emphasis, to show the relation of jobs to art.

Naturally the question arises: Has it been possible to achieve a degree of cultural unity commensurate with the unity of economic interests? The question gets no for an answer. The excellent intimacy of the arrangement made one feel as though he were strolling among good acquaintances, the heads communicated, the figures took you by the arm. But only certain groups spoke to one another, the economic barriers were down but the cultural boundaries were still there, and the languages impossible to transcribe.

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Curiously, I did not find this so distressing as a revolutionary (in its broadest sense) critic might. The tradition of modern sculpture is so complicated that the utmost latitude must be granted the artist that he may, on the one hand, solve the problems of craftsmanship, and on the other, relate his craft to the new subjects offered him. Modern sculpture has, perhaps more than any other art, suffered from, as well as profited by intense concentration in a limited field of experience. Having lost all connection with religious ritual or communal events, it was very quickly confined to the study as its chief form of expression. Every past age of sculpture as well as Negro, Mayan, Aztec, South Sea and Eastern Island statuary and architecture was carried into the experimental studios. But the chief cause of life had left the figures and the sculptor was forced to replace a physiological analysis by morphological dissection. He learnt his anatomy beautifully but the body was cold. The new work arose out of a kind of aesthetic discourse on the old work or out of nature seen in terms of such a discourse. The reduction to absurdity of this historically inevitable quandary of the sculptor is in Brancusi's totem-pole abstractions minus the least totem significance. The spectator is asked to admire the full beauty of an untranslated Alaskan poem.

Obviously, what was needed was either gods (out of date), ritual (out of place), or persons and experiences of sufficient meaning to permit the sculptor once more sincerely and unashamedly to interest himself in expressing extra-formal significance by formal means. The revolutionary movement provides these persons and events and also a consciousness, never obvious but always present, of their place and direction. The sculptor can now convert the material of his studies into the living substance of communal, that is, revolutionary, sculpture.

He *can*—but permission is not fulfillment and all imperative answers to the question are so much critical insolence. All that can be said is that the artist should think about the question, and subject himself to experience as a man who creates rather than as an artist who also lives.

What I've said was sharply evident in the Union show, where some of the least ambitious works—a head here, a study there or a torso, were the most sensitive in modeling, the subtlest in their tactile quality, firmest in their apprehension of mass.

Conversely, work that was more ambitious, work of revolutionary content, was often strained, insensitive, romantic, exaggeratedly linear rather than sculptural, more caricature than sublime. There is today an unfortunate tendency toward a monumental approach; that is, the artist tries less to make a monument of a worker than to conceive of workers as monuments. The workers emerge in forms neither pleasing nor recognizable to themselves. I am sure that no worker would care to be muscle-bound in a symbolic trance.

These difficulties are chiefly due to the fact that many revolutionary artists have sworn an intellectual oath which their sensuous and day-to-day experience is not yet able to help them fulfill. They too apply more intensity to the conception of the work of art than to the aesthetic apprehension of a real experience. This forces them to express the experience symbolically, or, to use a hasty image, to grow a Marxian kernel inside their immature fruit. It would be better to begin with realistic figures and groups which would become symbolic to the degree in which they had particular dramatic and historical point. The symbols of socialist realism are dynamic not only because they express historic movement but because they are embodied in the actions of individuals and groups in society creating historical movement. I should like to suggest that as bas-relief is the best, perhaps the only really adequate way of dealing with groups in sculpture, the revolutionary artists should take this sphere away from the fake classicists and rococo champions who now hold it.

Clarence Weinstock.

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CORRESPONDENCE

AND SO ON AD INFINITUM—

Editors of the ART FRONT:

Dear Sirs—

In asking you for five hundred extra words in which to consider comments on my answers to your ten questions I assumed that the discussion was to continue on the plane indicated by the questions—on an impersonal and thoughtful one. Had I known that I was to be subjected simply to another attack, I would not have "scooped" you.

I do not answer attacks for the reasons set forth in my note to you of February 14, for the publication of which I want to thank you.

May I say in reference to Jacob Burck's article, that his attitudes toward me and my work are evidently the result of a misunderstanding of my position—a misunderstanding which is the result of his frozen belief patterns, and not the result of malicious distortions of a defensive nature. Burck's capacities as artist are, in my opinion, possibly an erroneous one, held in check by his belief patterns. But they are sufficiently manifest in his actual work to free him from the harsher implications of my note of February 14. But though there is no evidence of petty malice in his article he reads certain obnoxious social views into my thinking, which I wish to correct for him by simply saying that with five of his six points, which he supposes are antithetical to my views, I am in complete accord, and that my objection to the sixth is a tactical one.

I still believe that collectivization may result from democratic procedures without the violent disruption of our social services, and without the need of armed forces installing and protecting a dictatorship, which, however idealistic its aims, has in history never proven to be anything in the long run but a repressive burden for the people on whom it was imposed. It is possible that such a dictatorship as that holding power in the name of the proletariat in Russia today may end exploitation, but it has not, to date, done so—nor is there any remote possibility of its doing so in the present state or any promised state of European affairs.

This being the case, I am one of those who believe that in our march toward a better production-consumption economy we had better cast aside all universal ideals of a theoretic nature, and work pragmatically with actual American forces to that end, taking full account at all times of the particular nature and character of those forces.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas Benton.

To the Editors of ART FRONT:

Dear Sirs:

Thomas Benton's letter focuses attention on the most important question facing modern society, the question of how social change can be effected. In agreeing with five of Burck's six points, and disagreeing only tactically with the sixth, Benton aligns himself, on paper, with those who want Socialism. Or is it Socialism he wants?

Many people, in a vague humanitarian fashion, urge "a better production-consumption economy" and urge "democratic" methods for arriving at this desired end. But it is a sad fact that the historic process is singularly inattentive to the pinchbeck urgings of well-intentioned individuals. Capitalist production is a battlefield—where those who work for a living and those who own for a living fight for their mutually exclusive interests. They can be reconciled no more than elemental fire and flood. Do you for a moment think, Mr. Benton, that bankers, large merchants and industrialists are interested in Socialism? Don't you know that these people control the political apparatuses, the newspapers, the educational institutions—that they overlay the body and soul of modern society? Don't you know that these people will create wars involving destruction, death, pestilence, mutilation and a thousand other horrors to protect investments or to capture markets? Can one expect such people to provide legal means for expropriating themselves? We would be political babies to think so.

It is to the interest of the exploiting classes to try harmoniously to reconcile all social groups. That would restrain the working class from militant bat-

tle, the only political and economic weapon it possesses. And if the working class shows any signs of voting in Socialism by the ballot, the bourgeoisie will pierce the balloon of democracy with the dictatorial sword.

Benton believes "that collectivization may result from democratic procedures without the violent disruption of our social services and without the need of armed forces . . ." But that is just why revolutions take place, because the *bourgeoisie* disrupts social services by denying to the mass of people the means of livelihood, because the *capitalists* use the armed forces to prevent the people from fighting for bread. Proletarian revolution arises to overthrow violence, not to create it.

Benton says history demonstrates that dictatorships have substituted one form of oppression for another. That is true, but we must remember that most dictatorships have represented the rule of minority classes for the purpose of exploiting the majority of the population. The dictatorship of the proletariat, on the other hand, is the dictatorship of the vast majority of the people over those elements who wish to re-introduce exploitative economic forms. It is the pre-condition for a Socialist society, for a classless society. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the historical weapon without which Socialism cannot be built.

If Benton wants a better society he can help by being an artist of the social revolution.

Jacob Kainen.

Gaylordsville, Conn.

Editors, ART FRONT:

If you read, as I did, Thomas Benton's answers to your ten questions ("This involves two further questions. . . ." etc.) . . . you must have been struck by the off-hand way your fifth question was disposed of. You asked: "What is the social function of a mural?" and his answer, as printed, was merely: "This is for society, as it develops, to determine."

Anyone familiar with Benton's style must have known that that answer was a phony, for he isn't the man to let a question like that whisk past him without trying to flag it down. . . . Without it, his whole argument becomes, as you must have observed, quite meaningless. We are therefore forwarding you the original answer, hoping, etc., etc.

Yours for Rapp, Owen, and the Brookfield Players,

Robert M. Coates
Petr Blume.

5. What is the social function of a mural?

This question can only be answered by defining "function," and before we get through we may have to define "what," "is," "social" and "mural" as well. "The," "of" and "a" we may accept in their common, or dictionary, meanings as implying this or that, as the case may be. "Function," however, deriving from the Latin verb *fungio* (*fungire, fungus, fandango*), describes a perceptual pattern primarily concerned with growth and usually malevolent in character, as toadstools, college Proms, husking bees and even the Bal des Quat'z Arts (and some time you've got to hear the stories Tom Craven can tell about that "function," if we may soil our lips with the word.)

This particular process of objectivization, or Art Form ("form" being here regarded in the sense of the "female form divine," as who wouldn't?) may seem to place Ohio somewhere north of Paris, where Nature obviously never intended it to be. But we must not forget that there is also a Paris, Ohio, which only goes to show that our pioneer forefathers had pretty revolutionary notions too, if only we could always be sure of what they were thinking about. Anyway, the whole "thing" (or conceptual behavior-complex) should become clear as soon as we get on to the word "social," which I admit is a hard one, especially in this context, since in its larger sense it implies "society" (as in the back pages of *L'ogues*), which in turn is something that Communists are not supposed to know anything about at all. Do not forget that I have read Marx too (greater part of Chapters XII and XIII of "Capital").

(Continued on page 8)

The Social Sterility of Painters

(Continued from page 5)

ulous distribution of values and materials. If it is true that famine reigns mistress over 50 per cent of the globe, it is because the keepers thereof are stupid or criminal. And so, collaborator and accomplice of one class, the painter remains ignorant that he serves nothing but a notion in full putrefaction.

What can then be the character of this sensuality? This we will examine later. But who will contradict us when we challenge rhetoric and criticism, evils typical of powers going down the descending slope to their death.

During this tragic decline there arise from time to time the isolated protests of individuals who have been if not actually smothered, at least relegated to the position of eccentrics in painting. This is the case with Rouault among the orthodox Catholics, of Max Ernst among the Surrealists, and of several others as well, fighting alone. In circles of taste they are reproached with not seeming to understand their age in the least, and with not being willing to sacrifice pure art to Moloch. But their insurrection against the current gospel could not take, could never take a decisive attitude; it lacks pure nourishment. The group of Surrealist poets undertook to divulge through the pen the protests of some of these men. Its undecided tactics assumed slowly the form of an agitation, at heart really revolutionary, fearless of politics. It is necessary at this point to make a digression to treat of the defunct agitation "Dada," and of the companions male and female of Andre Breton.

It would seem vain to me to repeat the sentence of Andre Breton, "One publishes to find fellow men, and for no other reason," had I not come across it recently in looking through a copy of his "Pas-Perdus," left, God knows by whom, in the gardens of the station Denfert Rochereau. Its cover attracted me to those benches in the squares which are used at that hour only by bums for the elaborate nursing of their toes, since they have no more to expect either in the way of seasons or of nailed soles.

I looked through the pages. I did not enjoy it particularly, even hating those choice bits which were suggestive of a more substantial repast. But the hours which follow directly after dawn gave birth to reflections which have in them something fortunate. I stayed, surprised to find Andre Breton after eight years seem at times so ridden with paradox at others so near the inside of man. How could I have read him in 1924 without leaping to that phrase? Yet it is true that much of the rest of the context drove me back.

For really, strange contradictions lie in the book, fruits of a compromise between this spirit, Dada-anarchist, and that taste of the age not yet overcome, that taste for the gratuitous, for gesture, for the shocking, whereas at other times the affirmation bursts forth that Breton has no other law, and no other challenge to hurl at the world than "desire." We could give some credit to this last term, honor it in a full and revolutionary sense. A group of intellectuals could believe in its reformatory, in its regeneration, if among them a few individuals, with full understanding, uphold a universal objective of desire. This the proletariat has discovered, who itself wants to live, and whose roots, still intact, can guarantee to that desire bitter integrity, clear vision to establish its principles. We have seen nothing in the proletariat that is gratuitous, that makes for gesture, for humor.

Jean Lurcat

(To Be Continued in Our June Issue)

Techniques and Media

(Continued from page 5)

it dry for one day in room temperature, not in the sun nor near heat. At this stage, if a canvas texture is required, raw linen (source, James McCutcheon, Fifth Avenue and 40th Street, New York) is soaked in hot size, laid on the panel, spread smooth from the center out with bare hands, folded over the edge of the panel and tacked to the frame with many thumb tacks. All air bubbles must be forced out by conscientious spreading. Let this dry for one day.

Gesso: Mix: One volume size, one volume whiting, one volume zinc white powder in a large bowl. Strain through a double layer of cheesecloth. Test

its brushability on a piece of wrapping paper and if it drags, add size by teaspoonful until it brushes without leaving brush marks. Give the panel one coat, thinly and evenly brushed out.

The brushing is half the game. Work fast, and with some system. For instance, after panel is covered, brush first north-south, then east-west, then north-south again, and so on, without adding more gesso. As soon as the gesso gets tacky stop brushing, but no sooner. Wait until this coat is dry enough not to come off on a gently laid on finger, then apply the second coat. Proceed in this manner until the panel looks satisfactory. I generally use three to four coats, then let the panel dry for at least one day and smoothen with fine sandpaper. Don't rub too long in one spot, as the friction will burn the glue.

This gesso work should be done with the panel in a horizontal position, and in a draftless room during a single day. If the weather is damp and the coats dry slowly so that the last ones are put on the next day in different weather, cracks may appear. If, during the process, the gesso gets thick, heat it again and add, not size, but a little water. The ratio between glue and pigment must never be changed.

This very white gesso is called absorbent gesso, and must be rendered less absorbent in order not to suck the medium out of the paint. An application of one volume of egg yolk, shaken up with three volumes of water, is advisable for tempera ground. Another protection, for both tempera and oil, is a solution of one volume of white five-pound cut shellac in four volumes of denatured alcohol. It is a good idea to make your drawing, if any, in water color or diluted India ink before taking this step. For erasures, use fine sandpaper.

Another gesso, semi-absorbent, for rough texture, and to be used on canvas on a stretcher without backing, is the following: Let the gesso described above cool, and add to it, constantly stirring, boiled linseed oil, in volume about one-third to one-half that used for glue size. (Pots and brushes must be cleaned immediately after use.)

Painting on this ground should not be begun before about one week after preparation of the panel. This gesso, when used somewhat thick, is plastic enough to permit the creation of a stippled texture with the brush. When applied thin, it is flexible enough for unbacked canvas. (I should not recommend the barbaric custom of nailing canvases for shipping even with gesso. It is like forcing a human being into a trunk for traveling.)

The advantage of gesso over a ground of white oil paint is, first of all, the total absence, or in the case of semi-absorbent gesso, the very small amount present of yellowing oil in the ground. Whatever light penetrates the paint will be reflected by the gesso, and give the picture a luminosity never approached by an oil ground. Furthermore, cracks due to faulty workmanship will appear in a few days, and not after years as in oil grounds.

Stefan Hirsch.

(Continued from page 7)

Now, "is" is not a word to be handled about loosely either, at least while I am around, nor is any other word, for that matter. Historically considered, it has no history, since it describes merely a state of "being," and hence only a coward, slavishly dependent on foreign influences, would dare relate it to our glorious past ("past" taken here to include our magnificent libraries, our Navajo sand paintings, our Rapp, our Owen, our Amara)—a past which our American art must take into account if it is going to mean anything, if anything. (The case of private ownership structures in the United States and throughout the world is here to the point, though I can't at the moment remember why.)

Thus rephrased then, and leaving out all the hard words, the question should read: "What are, or was, a murals?" (Note the plural.)

I shall make no bones about my answer. It is, "May be."

DANIELS

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Sculptors and Carvers

(Continued from page 2)

Despite short notice, there participated in this meeting the Modelers and Sculptors of America, the Woodcarvers International Association, the Architectural Sculptors and Stone Carvers Association, the Artists Union, the White Collar Conference on Work Relief, the Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians, and other American Federation of Labor trade union committees.

The speakers from the American Federation of Labor unions called the present period the most critical in the history of their unions. They pointed out the large percentage of unemployment in their locals (as high as 90 per cent of their membership in some cases), and the fact that those members who were working were working only part time. They called for united action to secure jobs and trade union wages for sculptors and sculptural workers, to utilize the skill and artistic training of years.

The meeting united in condemning the policy of wage cuts practiced by the Park Department in its tricky classifications, and scored the Roosevelt Administration for its denial of prevailing trade union wages on relief projects. Phil Bard, speaking for the Artists Union, pointed out the need for organization of the unorganized on the jobs.

A provisional committee, consisting of two delegates from the trade unions, was elected to arrange for a mass meeting, and plan future action on the following program, unanimously adopted by the meeting:

—For trade union wages on all works projects, with the guarantee of a minimum of \$100.00 per month for skilled and \$80.00 for unskilled labor.

—For the Workers' Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill, H.R. 2827.

—For the organization of the unorganized into A. F. of L. unions.

—For the right of all workers to elect their own representative on each job to handle complaints and grievances.

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